HUMBER STREET GALLERY

 **CONSULTANT GUIDE FOR ARTIST DEPTH INTERVIEWS: LEE PRICE**

**Artistic Practice**

**Q. How did the concept for the House of Kings & Queens project and exhibition come about? [Probe: did Hull 2017 approach you, or did you approach them?** Covered below**]**

I got an e-mail from David Sinclair erm toward the end of last year (I think that he had had an e-mail from Magnum Photography that I had entered a competition 15 years previously –as I had covered a similar topic for that competition and I think that they felt that my name was a natural one to put forward to David.

**Q. How did the exhibition become part of the LGBT50 celebrations? [Probe: was it always planned to be so, or did this come about later in the process?]**

The first e-mail that I got from David talked about the LGTB season as it were so it was always going to be intended for that purpose.

**In what way, if any, were you involved in the Moved by Art workshop, with local artists and young people, which explored your exhibition?**

I had no knowledge of that –I saw it on line I think but I wasn’t told it was happening. I just happened to see a page about it on line but I didn’t actually get told so I don’t know much about it to be honest.

**Q. Can you tell me a bit more about the process of working with Hull 2017 & Humber Street Gallery staff to develop the concept for your project, and content of your exhibition?**

I only really had contact with David Sinclair and Martin Green throughout the making of the work itself and they were great throughout the making of the work itself. We had quite a few meetings when the project was being shot and afterwards when the project was being installed within the gallery –so I have nothing but positive things to say about the staff.

**Q. [Probe: How did Hull 2017 and Humber Street Gallery help to develop the exhibition? Did their input result in any major changes?]**

Changes might be the wrong word – I had my ideas David had his and we would come together and share them and come to a compromisebetween the two. For example I had an image of the exhibition having a classic a feel to it with black framed pictures and white walls. The exhibition didn’t turn out that way – it was a process –David came to me with an idea –here is a picture-here is a mood board and you know it was a collaborative thing rather than my ideas being changed whatever. I was very pleased how the exhibition turned out in the end (I did have my doubts –but David asked me to trust him) and the work that I did I am pleased how it turned out in the end.

**Q. In what way, if any, has this collaborative approach with the team at Hull 2017 and Humber Street Gallery altered your approach to your own work or your ideas?**

Yes I am used to working on my own and doing things my own way. I think this exchange of ideas helped me to consider new ways of working.

**Q. Overall, how do you feel your artIstic practice has been developed, if at all, by this project?**

Yes it has this is probably the biggest project I have under-taken so far –so I have learnt a lot working with the people dealing with those situations – but dealing with artist practice. that makes sense. That was the main problem was a) finding people who were gay and b) people who were willing to be photographed – almost put themselves at risk –ok not showing faces etc. there is still a degree of risk involved with somebody you don’t know –I could have been anyone –there was certainly issues with finding subjects erm but luckily we had a fixer who happened to know someone who he had known for quite some time and this person to me to this house which was the House of Kings and Queens –so we kind of struck it lucky I guess erm but it turned out well in the end.

**Q. [Probe: How did this experience differ to others you have been involved in? What new approaches or techniques have you utilised? How have you adapted your way of working to deliver the project?]**

I guess it goes back to working with other people and taking their ideas on board and listen to what they have to say – I couldn’t have just said this is how I want it –obviously I could have done but that is not the way how we worked within this project. Other than that it probably doesn’t differ from they way I work on other exhibitions.

**Q. How successful do you feel your exhibition was in delivering against your original idea?**

Erm yeh I think it was very successful. Erm I think it turned out a lot better than what it was intended to originally intended to have a smaller space booked for this work and I think it was after David had shocked me and said I have this other space I would like to use and it is twice the size –if not more and we can do a lot more with it – we can more prints in there we can be more playful and I think it turned out better when the project first started – we were able to display a lot more we were able to print bigger- we were able to do a lot more with it.

**Heritage inspiration (if relevant)**

 **Q.With your exhibition being part of LGBT50, how did you hope your exhibition would fit within the wider LGBT50 programme?**

I think it is very relevant – as the programme is also in other parts of the world it was part of the story.

**Q. [Probe: How do you see your exhibition contributing to the commemoration of partial decriminalisation of homosexuality in parts of the UK?**

It focusses on another part of the world but recognises that we have come a long way in the last 50 years and that is something to look at.

**Q. In what ways do you think your exhibition provided audiences with a new perspective on the life of LGBT individuals and communities?**

I think that people aren’t aware of what goes on in other parts of the world because it isn’t really covered by the media and people live in their own little bubble-‘while over here’ homophobia still exists but it is in a much better place and I think people forget that there are still other parts of the world that haven’t made such progress and are still living as we were 50-60-70 years ago and yeh so I think it helps people to open their eyes –it helps to educate essentially as to what goes on and while you may not be used to this image here this happens in some parts of the world which this talking about.

**Q. Did you research or consult with historical or heritage-based information, resources or experts when developing your project and exhibition? If yes, can you explain what research or consultation you undertook? [Probe: archive research; conversations with heritage professionals; online research; visits to museums and galleries]**

I looked into the laws and the history of the country to see how it came about. No archives don’t exist. There are media articles on Freetown and in particular someone who as killed for the work that they did –this about 10 years. In terms of documentation of this stuff there is not a lot that goes on. This work documents something that isn’t documented quite enough.

**Q. In what way, if any, did the information and resources you accessed develop and / or challenge your existing knowledge of the themes you were presenting via your project? [Probe: were your own thoughts and feelings challenged? Did you find out anything new?]**

Perhaps not I was aware of what was going on in that part of the world-I had been to Uganda not long previous erm and it is quite a similar story in Uganda –so I wasn’t particularly surprised by what I read about the conditions in Sierra Leone –it was definitely interesting to read but whether it changed my approach I am not sure.

**Q. How did you use any historical or heritage-based information and content within the exhibition itself?**

Erm, no.

**Project Location & Marketing**

**Q. How was the decision arrived at to use the space off Humber Street as a venue for your exhibition?**

I think that was always intended to be there –I am not sure how that came about –that was decided before I was involved in the project. The room changed but it was still located at HSG. I couldn’t comment on how David came to that conclusion.

**Q. How do you feel the space worked as a location(s) for your exhibition? [Probe: strengths and weaknesses]**

So the new space that was chosen was much –and definitely worked better as I had quite a few prints that I wanted to display. We wanted to print larger prints so it definitely gave us more space as to what we physically wanted to show. As for the aesthetic –if I was to do it again I think I would have gone for white walls and wooden floor and spot lights –it is not to say that I am dissatisfied with how it looked –that is just how I saw it. The size was the biggest strength –the aesthetic of the actual room itself it was quite reminiscent of Freetown itself so it was quite unpolished and unfinished –so I get what David was trying to do there.

**Q. What advantages and disadvantages do you feel resulted from your exhibition running alongside the States of Play exhibition at Humber Street Gallery?**

Erm I am not sure really –they were quite different pieces of work so maybe people who didn’t come to see my work and had come to see ‘States of Play,’ might have been encouraged to pop next door and see my work. It might have encouraged an audience who might not have seen it to see it –but the works themselves were quite different –so I am not sure I have thought about it to be honest.

**Q. Your exhibition was promoted as part of the LGBT50 programme. In what ways do you feel this created both opportunities and challenges for your exhibition?**

Been part of LGBT50 it was probably taken more notice of because it was part of that programme and there was a lot of hype around the programme marketed it really well-so I imagine it served the project well –I am not sure there are any disadvantages of being part of that to be honest.

**Professional Development**

**Q. To what extent, and in what ways, do you feel that you challenged yourself with the exhibition? [Probe: artistic and curatorial approaches; technical skills; operational decision-making]**

I guess one of the things that was difficult was not having any faces in the exhibition in documenting the house –while not showing these faces was one of the biggest challenges. There were also challenges to do with trust within the house and I was person with a camera and there were difficulties within the house itself and the subjects themselves certainly for the first trip-by the time of the second trip people had warmed to me more. And challenges in the actual installation itself –I had a very clear view in my mind how it was going to look and that was challenged-so I had to do something which I am not good at which is listening to other people’s ideas and taking them on board and erm I was happy that is turned out well so I am glad I did it (The fixer was employed by Hull 2017 –set things up helped with translation).

**Q. What was the most exciting part of working on your exhibition?**

It was being out there hearing people’s stories and getting to document it –it was awesome –obviously out of my comfort zone –didn’t know any people and had to find people who essentially lived underground. It was difficult –it was challenging but also very exciting. It was just awesome.

**Q. What are the key lessons you have learnt from your exhibition that you will take forward into other projects you develop?**

I think in terms of display I don’t I have displayed in this way –so working with David has really opened my eyes to different ways of doing that and more playful ways of doing that.

**Partnerships & Collaborations**

**Q. If you built new partnerships, or developed existing partnerships when working on your exhibition, did these partnerships result in you developing different ways of working that you might use in future? If yes, please expand.**

Yes answer is the same to the one previous –that is working with David new ways of installing and displaying.

**Quality metrics – project perspective**

**Q. How did the story you wished to present come through in the final exhibition?**

Yes story is the right word-here is this house which is ‘bang in the middle’ of a country where gay people are not only not accepted they break the law every day by being gay or at least sleeping with men. So this house provided sanctuary for people and feel safe without judgement but it is also a place where people have to hide and both of those points come through quite well. They are free to live in this house and live without judgement but also there also hidden from the outside world and both those things came out well.

**Q. Reflecting back on your exhibition what, for you, were its strengths and weaknesses artistically?**

It has been said that the work focusses more on erm the conditions in which these people live in and less on the liberation that the house provides –which wasn’t my intention – I really wanted to get across that these people are kind of free in this house and I am sure that that came across as strongly as the secrecy in which they live but also it was partly due to the fact that I couldn’t show faces and it is difficult to –or it kind of limited me basically –so I guess it was kind of –it caused limitations to get that point across as well as I would have liked to.

**Q. Reflecting back on your exhibition what, for you, were its strengths and weaknesses in terms of its production and presentation?**

Yes I think I have answered on a few questions –but basically we had quotes from people that I have met which talks about their life and they are the conditions that people go through out there and the house itself which what the house provides. So next to the imagery we had these quotes which is one of the strengths erm –it is something a lot of people mention give feedback when they are talking about the presentation which I think is one of the strengths. I can’t think of any weaknesses as I said I would have liked to have seen ‘classic white wall’ –clean aesthetic but I am not displeased with how it turned out.

**Quality metrics – public perspective**

**Q. How do you feel the audience reacted to your exhibition?**

I think it got a good reception –lots of people were talking about how it opened their eyes and how bad it has got in other parts of the world and I think that the nice thing is that it touched people and it inspired an emotional response and it touched people –which was always a high aim.

**Impacts**

**Q. If you were asked what the key measures of success should be for your exhibition, what would you say? [e.g. audience numbers, audience profile, media coverage, sector response, audience response, professional opportunities resulting from it]**

I would say audience response –it is great to have lots of people see it but if most of those people don’t really like it then it is pointless –erm for people to have come out of the show and have been in some way is the most important thing for me.

**Q. How do you feel the exhibition performed against these key measures of success?**

Yeh –I have only really heard positive things – I am sure there are plenty of criticisms about it but I haven’t heard any. Erm I just haven’t been told about them –I just wouldn’t know the answer to that question. From my point of view I am really pleased.

**Q. Do you have any further comments on the project?**

Nothing really stands out –it was a great experience erm and the team was great from start to finish and have no qualms what-so-ever –that all that I have to say really.